

It's Smart To Be Gallery Wise!

## THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

N E W SF L A S H E S

September 1,

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TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS: Central Loan Gallery - Beginning September 1st and continuing until the 26th, the Central Loan Gallery will be installed with a comprehensive group of American Landscape and Genre Paintings from the permanent collection.

It is interesting that the first native school of painting to develop in America was that of landscape. Fine though our portrait painters such as Stuart, Copley, and West had been, they were closer to England than to any indigenous expression. Then in the first quarter of the nineteenth century when the country itself was beginning to emerge as a personality, a group of native born artists who had never studied elsewhere and who had no influence from such pastoral painters as Gainsborough, Constable, or Turner, began to record the beauties of the American countryside, particularly in the region of the Hudson River.

Their canvases are literal transcriptions of the softly rolling hills, the violet distances and the lush green of the meadows of New York state. So consistently did they confine themselves to this one district, that the group has been known as the Hudson River School. Here for the first time was an expression that was purely native, and while the canvases cannot compare with the superb work of Constable, they are the finest representations of our natural beauties that have ever been painted and were untouched by any of the isms of Europe.

While perhaps not the founder of the group, Thomas Doughty is the most important of the earlier men, and is represented in our collection by a fine example, "The Ferry", in which we see the noble elms, the calm river and the wide expanse of hills and sky that distinguishes the countryside of New York. Doughty, who had been a leather merchant, turned to painting late in his life and never made a financial success of it, yet there is no suggestion of unhappiness in his many canvases with their soft colours and glimpses of country life. Of this same first period is Asher Brown Durand who is represented by a landscape which is being exhibited for the first time, and in which we see the fine effect of hazy atmosphere that he always achieved. More famous as our first engraver, the chief charm of his paintings lies in the detail which he depicts with a loving interest. His was a simple soul and we shall find none of the emotional quality that marks the work of Inness.

More definitely of the Hudson River group are Sonntag and Gignoux, who though born in France, came early to America and was Inness' only teacher. Gignoux' "Winter Landscape" has touches of Breughel in the little figures, and there is a fine feeling of cold in the grays and blues that he has used. Contemporary with these painters is the little known J. C. Ward, whose "Natural Bridge" is a lovely transcription in greens of Virginia's famous natural wonder.

Somewhat later than the landscape group, another native development, that of genre painting, was distinctly American. The earliest in this section is a "Hunting Scene" by an anonymous artist, which shows a strong influence of the English School, and was painted perhaps in Virginia, with its lively hounds and carefully posed hunter. Seen also for the first time is "The Thirsty Drover" by John W. Edmunds who was famous for his sense of humour and who combined painting with his duties as a bank cashier. The scene recalls the work of Morland, and is touched with Victorian sentimentality, with its rustic laundress and the demure country child handing a drink to the squire from a near-by estate. To this group belongs our "Fishing on the Mississippi" by Bingham, which is typical of his power of observation and his straightforward expressions of frontier life.



Typical of the next generation of landscape painters who went to France to study and who became interested in impressionism, are Theodore Robinson and Twachtman, whose last painting, "Harbor View Hotel" is one of the finest in the permanent collection, and shows that he was closer to Corot than to Monet in his exquisite tonal harmonies. "View of the Hudson at Milton" is a later work of Inness, our finest landscape artist, and is a favorite view of the river from his up-state home, with his daughter in the foreground.

Robert Henri and Alexander Wyant are represented, as are the contemporaries, Lawson, Koeniger, and Lucioni, of whom it has been said, he is the most popular American painter since Stuart. This retrospective exhibition will do much to convince one of the importance of the landscape painting school in America, and the very definite contribution which its artists have made.

DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLOURS: For the month of September, the first Loan Gallery will be hung with a group of fine drawings and watercolours from the permanent collection. A number of examples that have not yet been exhibited will be shown, including a sensitive watercolour by the young American Artist John Heliker, who has just been launched in New York. This example has been presented to the Gallery by Maynard Walker, Esquire, and is most representative of this twenty-six year old painter who is almost entirely self-taught. From a private collection is lent one of the latest pen and brush drawings of the French Neo-Romanticist, Eugene Berman, who has exhibited with such success in New York. Berman is the leader of the group of young artists who are turning from abstractions to more literary subject matter and whose poetic canvases are the loveliest paintings being produced today. The entire field of drawings will be covered, from Italy of the 15th century to the work of contemporary artists.

CHINESE DRAWINGS: Of particular interest for comparison with the above exhibition, will be a series of Chinese Drawings which will be hung in the South Loan Gallery. Coming from the estate of a contemporary Chinese artist, it is the only collection in America and it is the first exhibition ever made of this fascinating and little known branch of Oriental art.

There are several reasons why Chinese Drawings are almost unknown in the Western world. It was usual for the artist to destroy his sketches once the painting was completed. If any did survive, often they were worn out by pupils or copyists. Fortunately, this series from the 18th and early 19th century has been preserved. For the most part they are hasty sketches, mere jottings in Chinese ink on thin paper. They are by a variety of hands and cover many subjects, landscapes, figures for larger compositions, and a special series of "Beautiful Ladies". In many cases colour notes are indicated by characters and often in the landscapes the trees are merely suggested and the type of leaves indicated by such words as "bamboo" or "pine needles".

They have the spontaneity and freedom that we associate with all drawings, and there is far more beauty and feeling for line than in the finished paintings of the period, where much of the artist's observation and suggested gesture is lost. In every case there is that sureness of execution and that mastery of a full charged brush that we always associate with the finest of Chinese paintings from all centuries.

FRENCH PRINTS: Gallery XVI has been installed with a retrospective exhibition of French prints, with examples from the 16th to the 20th century. Beginning with our two rare examples of Duvet, "The Unicorn Purifying the Stream" and "The Martyrdom of St. John", and a fine circular architectural composition by Gourmont, it will include several 17th century portraits, a rare 18th century religious subject by Fragonard, and a superb "Portrait of Cardinal duBois" by Drevet. From this same century date the two exquisite colour prints by Dubucourt which have recently been added to our collection. A number of 19th century prints that have not been exhibited before, notably a Jacques "The Hamlet" and a Millet "Peasant with Wheelbarrow" will be shown, as well as work by Daumier, Manet and Toulouse-Lautrec. Plates by Gauguin and Redon and the loan of a "Nude" by Renoir and a fine line etching, "Lysistrata" by Picasso, will bring the exhibition into the 20th century.



GOYA "CAPRICES": The selection of prints from the series of the "Caprices" by Goya will remain on display in Gallery XV through September. These strange, imaginative creations are a never failing source of interest to print lovers and the impressions belonging to the Gallery collection are particularly fine ones.

INDIAN TEXTILES: An interesting exhibition of Indian and allied textiles from the permanent collection, augmented by loans and gifts, has been installed in Gallery XXIV. Included are examples of Indian Saris, Folk Embroideries and woven materials, Cashmere shawls, and Turkish embroideries and velvets. One of the most important pieces in the group is a hanging of 16th century Broussa velvet with a large palmette design in gold threads.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: One of our most popular paintings, "The Parliament of Birds" by Melchior Hondecoeter, which unfortunately is too large to remain on permanent exhibition, will be featured as the Masterpiece of the Month. A nephew of Weenix, the artist studied with both his father and his uncle and became famous for his canvases of birds of rare plumage, live fowl and game. Living entirely in the 17th century, he worked in both Utrecht, his birthplace, and in Amsterdam.

"The Parliament of Birds", which comes from the famous Holford Collection, has been exhibited at the British Institution and at Burlington House. It is one of his finest scenes of this type, and as an example of technical proficiency entitles him to rank as one of the foremost painters of textures. He has grouped the birds in a masterly composition in the midst of classical ruins, as if they were the Senate of ancient Rome, met for some animated council. Hondecoeter had an unsurpassed knowledge of bird life, and his peacocks, wild geese, cranes and pheasants are almost character studies. The ability with which he has differentiated the texture of the soft down, the stiff feathers and the stone of the ruins, marks him as one of the masters of still-life painting.

GIFTS: It is with great pleasure that the anonymous gift of \$2,000 for the Library is announced. The work of the staff has been handicapped by the lack of an adequate library with which to carry on its program of education and interpreting our superb collection. This gift will make possible the addition of many necessary and important volumes and the entire staff joins in extending most grateful appreciation to this donor. It is hoped that other similar gifts for the library and for education will be forthcoming in order that the Gallery can make its fullest contribution to the community.

Mrs. Sadie A. May of Grossmont, California, a generous patron of the Baltimore Museum and the Museum of Modern Art, has just presented three very important examples of contemporary French painting. "The Small Tragedy" by Andre Masson is a characteristic work by this leader of the Surrealist group and gives us our first representation of this at times startling but always interesting movement. "The Bathers" by Othon Friesz is a sensitive and subtly toned example of his nude studies. A strong admirer of Cezanne, Friesz ranks with the finest French artists of today and there is almost a romantic touch to his fine groups of nudes, or his studies of ports and the sea. This painting has been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. The third painting is a "Portrait of a Man" by Pierre Brune, one of the younger contemporaries. These three examples of the painting of today will be a welcome addition to Gallery XII.

A Javanese Sarong of the interesting ikat weave has been presented to the Gallery by Allen Logan, Esquire, of Kansas City. It is an important addition to our textile collection and has been included in the display of Indian fabrics in Gallery XXIV.

Mrs. George W. Chamberlain has presented to the Gallery a fine group of early American objects, including silver of the early 19th century; a quaint and charming sampler of the 18th century; and a particularly fine blue and white woven coverlet which is signed with the initials of the weaver and dated 1834.

Other interesting and important gifts include a German land-grant of the 17th century, written on parchment, presented by A. W. Peet, Esquire; a fine Swiss lace and embroidered handkerchief given by Miss Lena Haag; and the watercolour drawing by John Heliker, mentioned above in the review of the September exhibitions, which is a gift from Maynard Walker, Esquire.



Sept. 1, 1936

VAN GOGH EXHIBITION: In spite of the extremely hot weather, the attendance for the Van Gogh Exhibition totaled almost 30,000 for the month that it was shown here. The interest was so widespread in the whole Middle West section, that it has inevitably made many new friends for the Gallery. Many people from Kansas City admitted that they had come to the Gallery for the first time, and they too, were inspired to come again. It is most gratifying to know that hundreds came because they had learned to love the work of the artist through our own superb "Olive Grove", which many felt one of the finest canvases in the exhibition. The appreciative support of our visitors enabled us to defray the expenses of the exhibition from the admission fees, and has encouraged us to bring other similar important exhibitions to Kansas City.

STAFF ACTIVITIES: The Director, Mr. Gardner, is sailing on September 5th to make a survey of German and Austrian Museums from the point of view of architecture, installation, and educational activities. He is one of a group of eight museum officials from the entire United States who have been invited to make this survey by the Oberlaender Trust of the Carl Schurz Memorial Foundation of New York. The purpose of this Foundation is for the development of cultural relations between the United States and the German speaking countries, and its program embraces many activities. This invitation is a distinct honor for the Gallery.

Laurence Sickman, Curator of Oriental Department, will visit Boston this month to see the special exhibition of Japanese Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It is the most important exhibition in this field ever held in this country and will rival the Burlington House Chinese Show. The Emperor has lent many objects from his personal collection and, for the first time, a part of the National Treasure of Art will leave Japan. So important and valuable are the loans, that members of the Imperial Guard have been sent to assist in the protection of the treasures.

Ruth Lindsay Hughes will return the first of the month from her special work at Fogg Museum under a Carnegie Grant. While in Cambridge she took special courses in Oriental art under Langdon Warner, Robert Treat Paine, and George Elisseeff.

SUMMER VISITORS: In spite of the disadvantageous weather, the Gallery has been thronged all summer with out of town visitors. On one day when the thermometer registered 105, fifteen groups came from as many different states from Maine to California and from Texas to South Dakota.

A. Conger Goodyear, President of the Museum of Modern Art, who is making a survey of new museum buildings in anticipation of the new gallery his Museum is to build, spent a day in Kansas City recently. He was particularly interested in the architecture of our building, in our modern conveniences, and in our unique installation.

GALLERY LECTURES: Beginning October 1st, a new series of free Gallery Lectures will be inaugurated for week days. These will concentrate on the Special Loan Exhibitions and featured shows, on the Masterpiece of the Month and some will be devoted to individual fields that have comprehensive representation in the collection. Such departments as silver, American glass, rugs, Chinese porcelains and Renaissance textiles will be included and the objects on display will be augmented by examples from storage. The series will run for a month and, as far as is possible, will be repeated.

SATURDAY MORNING CLASSES FOR CHILDREN: Inquiries are already being received concerning the Saturday morning classes for the coming season. It is planned to open the classes on Saturday, October 3rd, with registration about two weeks in advance. Announcement will be made in the newspapers as to the exact time for enrolling and also information as to what classes will be offered.



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